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ABSTRACT

Scouting is an expanding worldwide youth movement, with more than 16 million members in 169 countries and territories. Its goal is to contribute to the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual development of young people. Since participation in development is one of the cornerstones of their program, scouts cannot ignore the challenge that literacy represents for them. Properly trained and organized, scouts can undertake literacy and reading promotion programs, and they can help create an environment in which this new knowledge can be used. Scouts do not embark upon literacy activities in isolation, but rather in cooperation with the authorities and other specialized organizations. Scouts are carrying out extensive literacy programs in Indonesia, where they are involved in literacy training, study centers, vocational training, and other programs. They also have taken advanced training courses and are applying their skills to literacy training in Haiti. In India, young scouts and guides participate in literacy projects within the framework of the National Adult Education Program. They have also been involved in literacy education programs in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Senegal, Benin, Zaire, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Bolivia, and Saudi Arabia. The scouts have published a series of four pamphlets to help other scout groups gets started in literacy work. (KC)

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LITERACY LESSONS

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INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR

Scouts serving the cause of literacy

by Jacques Moreillon

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INTRODUCTION

Scouting is a worldwide youth movement in expansion, with more than 16 million members in 169 countries and territories. Founded on the volunteer system, it is an educational movement of a non-political nature and open to all.

WHAT IS SCOUTING?

The scouting movement was founded in the United Kingdom in 1907, inspired by the ideas of Lord Baden-Powell and his book 'Scouting for boys'. *This book and the programme it set forth had great appeal for young people and were quickly disseminated throughout the entire world. The movement today remains faithful to its original objectives of the Scouting Promise and Law. But with regard to its programme, scouting has adapted itself to the aspirations of young people and different societies in the modern world; it is constantly evolving.*

Its goal is to contribute to the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual development of young people. But it can also be seen as education for life, for it complements the school and the family, by responding to needs which they cannot fulfill. At the same time, it encourages self-knowledge, a desire for discovery and the willingness to learn.

The World Scout Bureau has published four pamphlets for scout associations wishing to become involved in literacy activities. The purpose of the first three is to help to:

- *understand literacy*
- *organize a literacy programme and*
- *prepare literacy documents.*

The fourth pamphlet, meanwhile, proposes training exercises on literacy for the benefit of scout leaders.

These pamphlets are available in French and English from the World Scout Bureau, P.O. Box 241, CH-1211 Geneva 4 (Switzerland).

Learning to read, write and reckon is one of the keys to development.

Since participation in development is one of the cornerstones of their programme, scouts cannot ignore the challenge which illiteracy represents for them. They belong to a country's biggest resource: its youth. They possess energy, enthusiasm, and the desire to learn. Most of them have received a certain amount of education and strive to contribute to the development process and the building of the nation.

Properly trained, organized and seconded, scouts can undertake literacy and reading promotion programmes; they can help create an environment in which this new knowledge can be used. This applies especially to older scouts in secondary schools and colleges, and for those who are working. They can help people learn to read, write and calculate, to understand their living conditions in order to improve them, to take advantage of other development efforts and achieve a feeling of strength and trust in the process of change.

Scouts however do not embark upon literacy activities in isolation, but rather, in collaboration with the authorities and other specialized organizations. These activities demand much work and dedication and firm guidance on the part of the scouting association. Scouts work with people who have their own ways of thinking and acting. They must create relationships based on confidence; this can take time and is not always easy. In some countries (Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, etc.), scouts are deeply involved in literacy campaigns.

Successful literacy programmes provide both illiter-

ates and scouts with an opportunity to learn and to share, to create together the desire to progress, to assume their responsibility as citizens towards their own future and to feel that, within their modest means, they are helping reshape the world.

Literacy and poverty

Illiterates are those who suffer most from unemployment, malnutrition and other consequences of poverty. Their families may lack food because, being illiterate, they will not be able to understand the best agricultural methods. In addition, they are exploited by dishonest merchants, because they cannot count.

The process of change

The world changes rapidly. Cities develop so fast that their inhabitants often lose the spirit of community. Values are not the same in villages and in towns. Advanced technology introduces new types of work and relationships. Modern means of communication enable each community to confront the twentieth century.

The fundamental principle is change. But change means risk, hence, an uncertain future. In the struggle to survive, where there is no leeway, illiterates refuse to take such risks. Changes are beyond their comprehension. They cannot grasp them, or benefit from them, and, too often, they only suffer as a result of them. For example, illiterate parents have difficulty understanding their children who are attending school, hence, a generation gap is created.

If development programmes are to come to terms with poverty, it is vital that people begin to understand their situation and to risk initiating a process of constructive change.

The examples given below show what scout associations have undertaken in the sphere of literacy work.

Gerakan Pramuka (Scout Association of Indonesia), in collaboration with the administration and various social welfare organizations, launched an out-of-school educational programme in the Malang district.

Since 1976, hundreds of thousands of persons have taken part in literacy courses. Several study centres have been created for young grade school drop-outs, and a regional vocational training centre for older persons in the same situation has been created; this centre currently serves training centres in several villages, as well as numerous rural workshops.

A programme of simulation exercises was launched with the goal of encouraging adult—adolescent discussion groups; this system is functioning in many villages and is also used for literacy exercises.

In 1979, the 'Bappenkap', the coordinating body within which Gerakan Pramuka plays a key role, was awarded the Unesco literacy medal.

More than 100,000 scouts and scout leaders have already demonstrated their ability in the field of community development and have collaborated with other organizations; this has earned them sufficient credibility and experience to undertake this out-of-school educational programme.

The beginning

Bappenkap had as its objective the total eradication of ignorance and illiteracy in the district, in order that each individual be able to participate fully in the development of the community. This also provided young people with the opportunity to learn techniques adapted to their environment, to improve their job oppor-

tunities and to participate actively in the building of their own society.

Constraints

There were, of course, several obstacles to overcome. Because such a programme demands a great deal of discipline and work, the efforts on the part of villagers and Pramuka were not always equal to the task. People did not always realize the importance of the programme and it was necessary to place particular emphasis on motivation by organizing discussions and games, by putting up posters, etc.

Due to limited funds, the supply of books and other materials was not adequate. Gerakan Pramuka did not have a sufficient amount of qualified, full-time personnel or the resources which would have made it possible for volunteers to adapt the programme to the country's needs.

The present situation

- *Literacy*: Today groups of pupils are organized in several villages, representing several thousand persons. Each of these villages now has a library; a portion of the books are supplied by the Ministry of Education, the remainder are collected by scouts. Teaching materials used in this programme consist of a series of booklets published by the Ministry of Education.

  Each study group consists of ten to fifteen persons, adolescents and adults originating from the same locality who are guided by one or two volunteer monitors, either a rover (an older scout between 18 and 25 years old), or some other person who knows how to read and write and who has been trained in the district's training centre. The group meets two to four evenings a week at the home of one of the participants.

The literacy programme teaches Bahasa, the national language of Indonesia, as well as reading, writing and arithmetic. Instruction is complemented with numerous activities of a practical nature, such as vegetable growing, taught by scouts specially trained for this purpose.

- *Study centres*: This programme was designed for persons who have not completed their primary school education. Gerakan Pramuka runs the study centres set up for this category of young people, not all of whom are scouts. Instruction is based on a system of self-teaching materials called modules. Each person works on a module at his own pace, assisted by a monitor if necessary.

- *Vocational training*: This programme is provided to several hundred students who have completed their official schooling, but who are out of work and do not have the opportunity to go on to higher education. Vocational training activities are offered, such as cabinet making, sewing, craft work, weaving, ceramics, radio repair, automotive mechanics. Each workshop functions like a cooperative. This programme also makes it possible to promote functional literacy.

- *Educative value*: Scouts take part in this programme at two levels. First, in acquiring certain skills which could be useful to them to earn an income; and secondly as volunteer workshop monitors helping the community.

- *Simulation games*: The goal of the programme is to help both adults and adolescents to express themselves and to better analyse and understand the changing world in which they live. It relies on simulation games.

- *Impact*: Some results obtained are very apparent. For example, before the programme began, it was customary to teach people how to make latrines, so that now a great number of them exist. Personal hygiene has been improved and households now air their mattresses and pillows in the sun. Village streets are cleaner, and fences and gardens are better maintained.
- *Future Outlook*: This programme also provided an example of a better way of successfully implementing out-of-school educational programmes in other districts. In fact, the idea of study centres for people not having completed their schooling was adopted by several provinces of Indonesia.

Scouts and guides in Indonesia have helped more than 200,000 people learn to read and write.

Literacy is a major problem in Haiti. According to Unesco estimates, 65.2% of the adult population in 1982 were illiterate.

Since many scouts able to read and write had already passed on their learning in this area to their families and friends, the Association decided to make use of this manpower.

Many scout officials have taken part in advanced training courses in the field of functional literacy and the training of teachers. With the help of experienced teachers and local authorities, they elaborated a joint plan of action and launched the campaign.

For participants, the literacy programme goes further than simply learning how to read and write. The subjects most often dealt with include child health and agricultural problems.

Some people may organize a group to plant shrubs in their free time, for they realize that the supply of firewood will be quickly exhausted. They learn that deforestation leads to erosion, one of the main causes of the low quality of harvests. Mothers in the courses make arrangements to take the children of several families to be vaccinated and, at the same time, to fetch a supply of rehydration salts for the village.

Scouts: a sense of confidence

For the scouts taking part in the programme, literacy work is not limited to simply writing a few words on the blackboard; it also contributes to a better understanding of their community and its needs. Organizing courses and teaching also afford scouts invaluable professional training, confidence in their own potential, and acknowledgement of their individual worth.

To a large extent, the programme owes its success to the fact that the courses are held in Creole. Although French and Creole are official languages of the country, only those who have the opportunity to attend school can learn French. Creole, on the other hand, is understood by everyone.

When the Scout Association became aware of the popularity of the courses, it raised funds to buy a printing machine and at present publishes a regular newsletter. The association has also published two books, one on the scout programme and the other on community development. These books, written in Creole, and have boosted the popularity of the scouts and have made people more aware of the scouts' contribution to development activities.

Increased public support of scouting

Although funding remains a problem, the excellent work accomplished by Haitian scouts in the area of literacy, among others, is beginning to be recognized and supported at the local level by government authorities, as well as by businesses and international and non-governmental organizations. It was in this way that the Haitian scouts received the support of the World Scout foundation, the European Economic Community, Boy Scouts of Canada, and many others. French and Belgian scouting officials also provided technical support in the form of the collaboration of experts. Moreover, the new vitality infused into scouting as a result has led more young people to join the movement.

IN INDIA, YOUNG SCOUTS AND GUIDES PERSUADE ADULTS

Since 1978, thousands of Indian scouts and guides have participated in literacy projects within the framework of the National Adult Education Programme. Literacy groups have been created in many states. Hundreds of libraries have been set up in villages and thousands of adults have received literacy training.

In order to help eliminate the problem of illiteracy, the Bharat scouts and guides have set up their own national programme. Several projects have been prepared and two literacy workshops were organized by scout commissioners in collaboration with the Literacy House in Luckow.

Below are summaries of the work of some of these groups:

- *Scouts of St. John's School Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh*

Three patrols went every evening for one month to Chilak Pet to take part in the organization of a literacy group. A fourth patrol helped them by supplying books, paper, etc. Every two days, the scoutmaster came to supervise the scouts' teaching activities. Everything was donated: slates, chalk, textbooks in Telugu (the local language) and other books for the 'book bank'.

- *Northeast Railway State*

There are hundreds of illiterates in the railroad worker colonies of Gorakhpur. Two literacy centres have been created at the state's scout and guide headquarters and in the colony of Vikas. Four other literacy centres followed. Adults between 25 and 45 years old were taught how to read and write words, sentences and numbers in Hindi.

• *The public school of Bharatiya Ambala in Haryana*
Adult literacy courses began in July 1979. The students are mainly rickshaw drivers. A special effort was made not only to provide instruction, but also to create a friendly atmosphere and to generate a sense of teamwork. Initially there was a problem of motivation, but the students, after having discussed their concerns, proved to be very eager.

In addition, the literacy courses have been economically beneficial to rickshaw drivers in two ways: first, the National Bank of India granted them a loan to purchase their rickshaws on a deferred payment basis; second, the parents of other pupils give them priority for transporting their children in rickshaws from their homes to school, constituting a source of income.

• *The Rambag Higher Education Centre for Adults, Village of Taliha, Orissa*
Numerous participants of from 15 to 35 years of age took these literacy courses. Advertising was done by means of posters. A programme based on community needs was worked out, and scouts provided the students with books and slates.

For three hours daily, participants learned to read, write and calculate. The courses also taught civics, health, natural sciences, agriculture and geography. With the help of the boys, the scoutmaster organized and conducted the courses; several teachers also contributed. Cultural activities and prayer were included in the programme. In addition, the scouts created a 'book bank'.

• *International Literacy Day*
International Literacy Day is the subject of a circular sent by the World Scout Movement to all member associations. In this way, many events are organized

In India, a scout teaches an adult to read.

each year in India at the national level in various regions and provinces.

Conferences to stimulate public awareness and urge people to attend literacy centres are held at the community level.

By committing themselves to the National Adult Education Programme, Indian scouts and guides knew that they were taking on an enormous task. For the most part, illiterates are poor, undernourished and jobless. There is no doubt but that India is changing. New hospitals are being constructed, new industries are being set up and more modern agricultural techniques are being introduced. Unfortunately, illiterates are often the last to be affected by these changes and the last to benefit from them. Ghandi was convinced that education and development go hand in hand; since independence, the struggle against illiteracy has always been one of the Indian government's main concerns.

Since 1978, the scouts of *Bangladesh* have made literacy one of their primary objectives. The efforts of hundreds of members, both young people and adults, have reinforced government activities in the struggle against illiteracy, a veritable curse on the country's more than 100 million inhabitants.

In *Pakistan*, the scout association has a project entitled 'Teaching one another'. This literacy programme concerns nearly all the provinces of Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan and the Punjab, and, at the district level, the areas of Peshawar, Mardan, Swat, Dir and Dera Ismail Khan.

In *Senegal*, a seminar for trainers of literacy instructors was held in 1984. This ten-day seminar was open to fifty scout leaders. Its objective was to sensitize scouts to questions related to literacy and community development on one hand, and to initiate them to the transcription of the national languages and to practice preparing literacy and community projects on the other. In short, they were trained and given information in order to be able to perform more effectively.

In *Benin*, in 1975, scout leaders attended a national seminar on literacy training in national languages. Since that time, scouts take part in literacy training of illiterates at the village level. During cotton sales campaigns, they introduce peasants to the basics of weighing and arithmetic.

In *Zaire*, scouts use a multi-purpose People's Education Centre in which classrooms have been set up. They plan to collaborate more closely with the Department

of Social Affairs in order to promote functional literacy for the benefit of adolescent girls and adults who have not gone to school.

Several of the world's scout associations have literacy programmes for women. Thus, in *Burkina Faso*, scouts and guides are very active in the area of literacy training. The scouts insure the functioning of the literacy centre in the province of Sandie for the literacy training of women.

The scouts of *Kenya* have not been idle either. They run literacy centres and create extremely valuable infrastructures within the framework of a vast housing programme by building classrooms, rural housing, latrines, parishes, community centres, etc.

In *Bolivia*, scouts have set up an important rural development centre in collaboration with fellow scouts from the Federal Republic of Germany. At this centre, located in Cochabamba, there now is a public library providing rural populations access to materials enabling them to continue to develop the literacy skills they have acquired.

In the Arab world, Riyadh, in *Saudi Arabia*, hosted a literacy workshop in 1981 with the participation of local scout leaders and others from *Kuwait, Oman, Qatar* and *Yemen*. This workshop was organized with the cooperation of Unesco experts in service in Riyadh.

In 1981, the World Scout Movement received an honorable mention in the Noma Literacy Prize awarded by an international jury for its commendable efforts involving the energy and commitment of young people in the struggle to eliminate illiteracy from the world.

CONCLUSION

To combat lethargy, apathy and ignorance, energetic, enthusiastic people are needed. To meet its basic requirements, the community needs persons who can take social and economic action and who are prepared to use their skills for the benefit of the community. Scouting can provide young people in the community, who have acquired a basic education and useful skills, with the support of a network of young people of the same age, and good reasons to remain in their community until their own development can have a direct impact on that of society.

This publication has been produced by the International Bureau of Education within the context of International Literacy Year, 1990.

The International Bureau of Education acknowledges with grateful thanks this contribution by Jacques Moreillon to the cause of Literacy. With a doctorate in political science, Mr Moreillon took over leadership of the World Scout Movement in 1988 in succession to Mr Laszlo Nagy. He had previously spent twenty-five years in different posts with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the last of which as Director-General. Upon his departure he was elected a Member of the ICRC. His various functions included development of educational projects, particularly in the Third World.

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